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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002907

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: MAOISTS ANNOUNCE ACTION AGAINST ELECTION

Classified By: Charge Elisabeth Millard. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) On December 22, the Maoists reacted to Vice-Chairman Giri's December 20 statement (septel) in a public relations campaign aimed at both internal and external audiences. Maoists announced a February 5-11 strike to boycott elections, including "physical action" against those involved in the campaign, and separately issued a statement agreeing in principle to the United Nations' and other development agencies' Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs). Political parties were unclear how the insurgents' announcement against the election would affect the Maoist's unilateral cease-fire, set to expire January 3. Newspapers reported on December 23 that senior rebel commanders had briefed journalists that the new Maoist battle cry was "to Kathmandu," as "feudalism can not be abolished by attacking small security posts in the villages, we will now aim at Kathmandu." End Summary.

Maoists Call for "Physical Steps" Against Elections

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¶2. (U) On December 22, Maoist leader Prachanda issued a statement calling for a February 5-11 strike to boycott elections and urged people to "revolt" against the "feudal rule" of the King, Crown Prince and other royalists. Prachanda said that during the strike period, all transport, shops, markets and educational institutions would be shut down. Prachanda also said that Maoists would take "physical steps" against poll officials and candidates. (Note: In the last general election, Maoists killed at least two candidates. End note.) Prachanda said that his party had called for a unilateral cease-fire and announced its willingness to elect a new Constitution for Nepal under international supervision. However, the government chose to see the Party-Maoist 12-point understanding as a sign of weakness by the Maoists and had announced municipal elections for February 8. In an e-mail interview in a Nepali monthly, Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai said, "In a country where there is no Constitution or law and only the King's command and decree prevail, elections have no meaning or rationale." He continued, "the so-called civic election is a ploy to legitimize the Fascist royalist government and hoodwink the nation and the international community." He noted that it was a "conspiracy" and people had to "be explained (why) they

should boycott and put an end to the polls." Bhattarai claimed that if the rebels resorted to violence in January to stop the elections, it would not affect their pact with the political parties, which had been urging them to give up violence. He said, "there is no relation between the truce and the understanding." (Note: The following is the Maoist action plan: 22 December to 13 January = Public campaign; 14 January to 25 January = Gatherings and meeting against the civic polls; 26 January to 4 February = Take action against the candidates participating in elections; and 5 February to 11 February = General Strike coinciding with the municipal polls. End note.)

#### Parties Unclear if Cease-fire Would Be Extended

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13. (C) Seven-party alliance members were unclear of the exact meaning of the Maoist leaders' statements. Jhalanath Khanal, UML Central Committee member told Emboff that it was "very difficult" to say if the Maoists would break the cease-fire. He noted that the Maoists had made clear their protest program, and it was unclear if they would also break the cease-fire. He admitted that UML leaders were working to clarify the situation with the Maoists. Minendra Rijal, NC-D spokesman, said that his party leaders were in Delhi urging the Maoists to extend the cease-fire. He said it was unclear if the insurgents would break the cease-fire at this time. Lilamani Pokharel, Vice President of People's Front Nepal said that the Maoists had not yet said they would break the cease-fire, but Vice Chairman Giri's December 20 statement "compelled" the Maoists to announce their political program. He noted that the Parties "can not blame the Maoists" as they had already extended their unilateral cease-fire with the appreciation of the Parties, the people of Nepal and the international community, but not the government, which had

"taken credit for the Maoists' effort" but had chosen not to join the cease-fire.

#### Prachanda's New Path: "To Kathmandu"

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14. (U) The December 23 Nepali Times weekly cover story reported that in briefings to selected journalists in Maoist heartland Rukum District, senior rebel commanders hinted they were using a two-track policy of using the political process, and if that path was blocked, to step up guerrilla attacks in and around the capital to pressure the regime. The Maoists said they held large meetings throughout the mid-west to explain decisions taken at their central committee meeting including the 12-point understanding with the Parties. The commanders said that the Maoist battle cry was "to Kathmandu." The article interviewed local rebel commander comrade Biplab who is quoted as saying, "feudalism can not be abolished by attacking small security posts in the villages, we will now aim at Kathmandu." The commander also explained that the Maoists had increased the number of divisions from three to seven to shift from rural focus to urban-centered. "Since the royal palace is not going to easily accept the establishment of a people's democracy, we need to strengthen the military in order to bolster people's power," Biplab reportedly said. He continued, "the moment the King cracks down on the parties and civil society our army will march on Kathmandu."

#### Maoists Agree to BOGs

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15. (C) On December 22, in a separate statement to the international community, Prachanda wrote "we appreciate in principle the Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) of the United Nations and other development agencies" and "have instructed cadres and local people's representatives to cooperate with it as per the specific situation of the place." The UN immediately welcomed the Maoist statement. Matthew Kahane, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, said in a press conference that "adherence to the BOGs by both the government and the Maoists will enable the international community to

more effectively implement development and humanitarian initiatives in conflict-affected areas." Erika Joergensen, World Food Program (WFP) Representative, said WFP suspended programs in ten Districts last year due to threats from rebels and resumed its programs only after Maoists gave assurances. (Note: The U.S. was only an observer in the BOGs process. Participants included donor agencies of Canada, Denmark, Britain, the European Commission, Japan, Germany, Norway and Netherlands.) Kahane told the Charge on December 23 that the wording of the Maoist statement was not exactly what the UN asked for, but that it was "close enough" as it contained an instruction to cadre and did not exclude any donors. The Maoist statement "appealed" to the international community to "work in regular consultation" with them. Kahane stressed that the UN had not agreed to consultation with the Maoists, but admitted that this often happened informally on the ground. Kahane said the UN had been pushing the Maoists to agree to the BOGs for two years and he felt the timing of their agreement was "politically useful" for the Maoists. He said the UN was urging the Maoists to extend their cease-fire.

Comment

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16. (C) Nepal's political parties will now have to make the difficult decision whether to remain associated with the Maoists -- who have made clear that their opposition to the elections will be violent -- and risk government retribution on grounds of treason. We understand that senior political leaders are meeting with the Maoists in Bihar in the days to come.

MILLARD